

Letter to the Editor

We are writing to express our concern regarding the publication of a refresher course article on “Perioperative aspiration: challenges and management options” in the SAJAA supplement of 2022.¹ It was recently brought to our attention that the article refers to the UpToDate fasting guidelines of three hours for breastmilk in children, and four hours after a formula feed.²

When the European guidelines were changed,³ PACSA appointed a team to evaluate these for endorsement, but after careful evaluation found that there was insufficient evidence of an appropriate level of quality at this stage to endorse the change. Thus, as we announced in the SASA newsletter at the time, the PACSA fasting guidelines have not changed, and recommend a four hour fast following a breastmilk feed, and a six hour fast following a formula feed.⁴

We believe there is clinical risk associated with following the guidelines recommended in the refresher course notes. We embrace progress in our field, and we look forward to future research outcomes from which we are able to make well-supported adaptations in all our guidelines, however, it remains prudent to hold back on changes that may be made in the rush of new exciting outcomes that are still waiting to be reproduced according to the standards recognised by our scientific community.

We appreciate how much work goes into preparing notes and talks for refresher courses, however, we are concerned about

misinformation that may be relayed because of a lack of peer review (by course organisers and/or SAJAA). We would like to suggest that the inaccuracies in the article are addressed formally and that a correction is published, and that in future, a rigorous peer review process is followed for all published work, including supplements.

We thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and look forward to an appropriate response to ensure the integrity of the scientific literature, and ultimately, to protect our most vulnerable patients.

Sincerely,

PACSA Council represented by

Dr Anisa Bhattay (Chairperson)

Dr Phillipa Penfold (Secretary)

References

1. South Afr J Anaesth Analg. 2022;28(5 Suppl 1):S173–177. <https://doi.org/10.36303/SAJAA.2022.28.5.2888>.
2. Ragg P. Preoperative fasting in children and infants. In: UpToDate, Davidson A, editor. UpToDate, Waltham, MA; 2022.
3. Frykholm P, Disma N, Andersson H, et al. Pre-operative fasting in children: A guideline from the European Society of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care. *European Journal of Anaesthesiology* | EJA. 2022 Jan 1;39(1):4–25.
4. Thomas M, Morrison C, Newton R, Schindler E. Consensus statement on clear fluids fasting for elective pediatric general anesthesia. *S Afr J Anaesth Analg*. 2019;25(1):S1–S5. Available from: http://sasaapi.sasaweb.com/Document/PACSAFluidGuidelines2019_636880741898136698.pdf.

Editor's response

Thank you for the concern raised about the supplementary article and for highlighting the South African guidelines. Your response provides the reader with valuable insight. Please note that it is not the policy of the SAJAA to peer-review Refresher

Course notes, and hence they are published as a supplement. This will be clearly stated in future supplements published by SAJAA.